

**Warrant Committee FY06 Meeting Minutes**  
**May 3, 2006**  
**7:30 p.m. CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
**COMMUNITY ROOM**

*Handout(s) distributed tonight are:*

1. *Budget vs. Actual through 3/31/06 compared to two prior years*
2. *Resolution of \$500,000 School department budget issue*
3. *Draft of a blueprint for change*

Member(s) absent: Fitzgerald, Hobbs, Paolillo, White

Also present: Town Administrator Tom Younger, Assistant Town Administrator Jeffrey Conti, School Finance Director Gerry Missal, School Committee Members Miller and Rittenberg, Town Treasurer Floyd Carman, Town Accountant Barbara Hagg

WC Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

***Minutes of 3/29/06, 4/5/06, 4/11/06, 4/19/06, 4/24/06***

The minutes of each meeting was discussed and corrected. After changes, they were approved by the Committee.

**Continued discussion of STM/ATM Articles**

The Moderator notified Chair Jones that he would like the WC package for the TM members be sent so that the TM members could see the package for two weekends before the meeting. The CBC will be sending their information the following day Friday 5/12. The WC minutes will have to be sent on Thursday 5/11.

Member Jones stated that many of the issues that were brought up on Monday at the BOS Meeting have come to resolution. This has been done by the Town Administrator and the Superintendent of Schools. The \$500,000 additional funds that the BOS wanted to give to the school has been funded by: increasing the building permit revenue estimate for FY07 this reflects the increases seen in FY06 with the beginning of the McLean building permits and another year is expected; health insurance on the town side will be decreased by \$100,000, give full local aid increase \$65,095 to the schools, and finally the decrease of \$40,000 from the senior center lease will be shifted to the school budget. This brought the total from the town to \$375,095. Dr. Holland is comfortable that he can make up the other \$124,905.

Chair Jones stated that he is pleased that the use of free cash and other reserves has not been used. He also feels that there may be additional revenues that are available from new growth. Member Callanan asked about the Town's intended use. Mr. Younger stated that the Town had intended to use the \$40,000 savings from the senior lease to restore the street lighting cut. This had not been implemented. Member Curtis stated that he feels that there are sufficient funds available in the revolving accounts to cover the \$125K needed on the school side. He feels that this is a zero risk proposition. Member Brusch has two concerns: street lighting cuts will cause angst to many of our most senior citizens and the cuts to the Belmont Library. She would support cuts to hours other than Saturday and Sunday. This will have a significant impact on the citizens. She asks that if there if additional funds are found in the town or school budget (retirements and employees not rehired) that they be shifted to keep the library open. School Committee Gibson stated that the # has gone from 6 to 7.5 retirements. There will be an interim principal with internal bumps to cover the open positions. Attrition in the school budget was 6 in the March budget but the other 1.5 have not been finalized. Member Brusch stated that she is accepting this compromise overall for the school budget. If there are additional funds freed up in the school budget the Education Subcommittee feels that building and grounds maintenance is crucial. School Committee Chair Gibson thanked the Town for their cooperation. Any increased money found in the school budget will stay with the school per BOS Chair Solomon. Member Heigham moved to endorse the arrangement as put forth by the Town Administrator. Seconded by Member Doblin. BOS Chair Solomon affirmed that any additional funds should stay with the school that they find within their budget. Member Curtis stated that \$34,705,233 less \$124,905 for \$34,580,328 is the budget they have been working with.

To continue with the discussion about the new funds found within the school budget staying with the school, Member Brusch stated that this is a legal issue and she agrees. On the other hand the Town has worked to renegotiate the lease on the senior center and had hoped to restore the street lights. Younger stated that the street lights will be cut approximately 25%. This will be a joint decision made by public safety and the light department for traffic, safety issues, and pedestrian safety. Custodial services and ambulance services were restored from the original reduced service budget, the Assistant CD Director was restored, there will continue to be one police position that will not be filled, one Inspector will be combined with the Resident Engineer, the Library had wanted the restoration of the Sunday hours this is not funded, we will not be watering the fields; delta and grounds maintenance will be cut (part of the town will be done by a private company as a gift). The top three for restoration are: Street lights are \$40,000, police officer is \$36,200, watering the fields \$19,000 – water and physical labor – there was concern about losing another asset (playing fields), Chair Jones would like any additional funds to go to this appropriation first. Member Doblin would like to have permit fees charged to anyone using the fields. Member Doblin does not feel that this is the most important thing to restore – library hours are also important.

Member Widmer would ask that the library hours be put into the top tier. This cost is \$20,544. This cut will be felt by many more people than other items in the top tier of restorations. Chair Jones asked Member Curtis whether the library contracts would allow

for the library to close on Monday & Tuesday and stay open the other days. Member Curtis stated that the core hours for full time employees are Monday through Friday. This is a labor contract that has been negotiated. Younger stated that other communities handle the hours in the same manner. Member Doblin made a motion that the WC recommends that the library hour restoration be put to the first tier and funded should funds become available. Younger will go over the budget again to see if anything can be reallocated. The motion has been withdrawn until next week. The budget is as settled as it can be tonight.

## **A Blueprint for Change – Short & Long Term Recommendations**

Chair Jones met with the Executive Committee of the Warrant Committee regarding the focus of the WC short term and long term changes. Members of the Executive Committee have some reservations about some of the proposals. A draft was distributed.

1. Long term changes: reduce cost of health insurance. Chair Jones would like to have a target date for completion. Member Callanan asked about the current status. A group requesting coalition bargaining will be meeting on May 15<sup>th</sup>. The decision will not be made on Monday the 15<sup>th</sup>. If the unions do not wish to enter into negotiations, we cannot open the contracts until 6/30/07. It is presumed that the new contracts will have to be negotiated during the next fiscal year. The retirees will have a 10% vote under the coalition bargaining rules. Currently they have no vote. Member Brusch asked that the WC be involved in the coalition bargaining question and also asks that the Town request each union negotiate individually and make that answer public. This needs to be concluded by June of 2007. Everyone is on the same schedule except for School AFSCME union and aides. Chair Jones stated that this is a critical question and Belmont is the gold standard for health insurance compensation for employees. Member Brusch stated that this has to be factored into the entire salary picture. If health continues its yearly increases of 12%, then we cannot sustain the pay increases. Chair Jones stated that failure to have a positive outcome will mean the failure of future operating overrides. Member Widmer stated that we have to be aware that the salary portion is such a large portion of the base that this is really the number one issue. Member Brusch stated that if you're looking at equal pay for equal work then we should give employees subsidies for not using the health, a smaller subsidy for single coverage, and the family coverage as the equalizer.

2. Regionalization of fire suppression/or emergency medical services, recreation and some educational services. The LABBB collaborative is a good example and there may be other areas (administrative) that can be considered.

3. Privatize recreation department to reduce the subsidy that is currently provided by the town. Several WC members will be meeting with the Recreation Commission.

4. Outsource more town services similar to the approach used by Charlotte NC. Costing the in house vs. outsourcing of each service

5. Eliminate trash pickup. We would maintain a transfer station but the residents would be responsible for transporting or having their trash transported. Or, we could consider a trash fee. Our bylaws are not the same as Lexington's that clearly stated that trash collection would be at no cost.

6. Public safety study – a comprehensive study of personnel and equipment for both police and fire
7. Consolidate departments, combining building and grounds, accounting and finance, and human resources (town and school). School Committee Chair Gibson asked that the school department be included in all these discussions.
8. Asset management plan, develop the plan, appropriate funds to implement the plan
9. Consider the sale & long term leaseback of fixed assets (buildings)
10. Feasibility study on the police station and involve the “Old Light Department Building” and the Belmont Center Planning Group should take this into consideration.
11. 19K sq feet Senior Center that is considerably larger than our current facility will cost a great deal more to maintain so a long term plan for funding should be studied. Are there other uses for that building that could bring in revenues?

#### Short term recommendations for FY07

1. Close the Benton library, sell building
2. Reduce the main library hours on weekdays. Member Curtis believes that management can decide to close Monday and Tuesday and weekends and open on only Wednesday to Friday. Member Curtis feels that someone needs to sit down with the Library Trustees to see what can be done. This should be pursued by Younger. Member Callanan asked that we also consider our membership with the Minuteman network.
3. Increase Recreation fees to cover costs. This will be part of the discussion next Monday.
4. Reduce overtime budgets in all departments. Injuries or lack of sufficient manning can blow this out of the water.
5. Make no reductions in the capital budget.
6. Make no further reductions in free cash in FY07
7. Check the details of the departmental budgets to ensure that they have adopted WC recommendations for cost savings. Budgets would be cut if recommended changes were not complied with.
8. Report on the Cemetery Commission’s aggressive plans for ending town subsidies for perpetual care.
9. Evaluate the level of funding for building maintenance in the school department. These concerns have been shared with the school department.
10. Old Light Department building disposition. The property belongs to the Town and there is a committee researching its future use. Member Heigham asked about deed restrictions.

Chair Jones stated that the current growth of our expenses demand that we begin to focus on the core services. Member Callanan would like a definition of core vs. non core and structural change. Also she requests that we identify the savings on each of these as they are implemented. Member Allison would like a rough estimate of the magnitude of each item. She volunteers to make some bold assumptions by next week. These have to be sized and done quickly.

Police, Fire, and education are core functions but not everything each does is core stated Member Allison. She asked if there are people in the town that can give us their best ideas and we could add to the list. We could have prizes such as pro bono work from WC members. We have to have ideas from other people. Perhaps put a request on the web or seek input from the TM members. Member Curtis feels that next week is too soon and without numbers that are meaningful we should slow down the labels for numbers.

Motion to adjourn by Member Heigham at 9:35 p.m.